

A Review of Safeguarding Information in Episcopal Churches: Philadelphia Diocesan Case-Study

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Overview

The Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania is one of 99 domestic dioceses of the Episcopal Church, corresponding to the civil counties of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia. Current self-reported statistics show 135 worshipping communities filing annual reports of membership (32,857 persons), regular active participation by 7,286 persons (22%), and annual financial support (\$26,847,579). It is the second largest diocese in Province III by both membership and number of congregations, after only the geographically larger Diocese of Virginia. The Bishop of Pennsylvania, the Right Rev. Daniel G. P. Gutiérrez, has articulated a “zero tolerance” policy around safeguarding offenses, with communications and responses to victims of such offenses to be met in trusting seriousness of the complainants’ credibility and their need for support as a result of church-enabled or church-located harm.¹

Purpose

To identify whether child safeguarding and vulnerable adult safeguarding information is available to members of the Diocese of Pennsylvania through their church websites, a primary point of regular contact with their own worshipping communities.

Method

I located the online presence of every church in the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania (<https://www.diopa.org/>) that filed a 2022 parochial report with the Office of the General Convention of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States (“the Episcopal Church,” <https://generalconvention.org/explore-parochial-report-trends/>).

When standalone, dedicated websites were available, I reviewed each page of the parish website for any inclusion of words or practices around several categories of human safety that have become foci of safeguarding energy in Episcopal Church life increasingly since the 1990s:

- any mention of the words “safe,” “safeguarding,” “Safe Church,” or “background check;”
- any mention of how or to whom to report a concern;
- any mention of populations vulnerable to exploitation because of status as a minor, an elderly person, a developmentally disadvantaged person;
- any mention of resources available to persons who have been victimized within those populations;
- or any indication of scheduled or completed training of any kind around safeguarding for parish employees or volunteers;
- any link to any organization offering Safe Church training;

¹ <https://www.diopa.org/news/protecting-our-children-2-25-22> and <https://www.diopa.org/news/updatewhitemore>

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- any indication of safeguarding background checks for clergy or staff;
- any provision of information to survivors of abuse within any vulnerable communities;
- any indication of pastoral availability for communication by victims;
- any indication of assistance to persons who have been trafficked;
- or any acknowledgment of past acts of abuse within church communities.

Findings from review of public information on church websites

Of 121 parishes or congregations with a website, three websites provide information about Safe Church training for employees (2.4%) and two websites have a landing page entitled “Safe Church” with no information on it (1.6%). Fourteen parishes or congregations do not have a website (10.3% of the diocese’s worshipping communities).

No parish or congregational website provides any information about whom to contact with a safeguarding question, concern, or complaint.

No parish or congregation provides any link to diocesan safeguarding materials, or to any organization offering Safe Church training.

No parish with a recent or former public history of serious safeguarding infractions in leadership acknowledges this fact, invites other victims to seek assistance, or explains what the parish has done by way of training or redress in response to cultures of misconduct or abuse.

No parish had any mention of populations vulnerable to exploitation because of status as a minor, an elderly person, or a developmentally disadvantaged person.

May 2, 2024

Parish websites, Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania

Place	Church	Website	Date visited	Safeguarding info
Abington	St. Anne	https://www.stannesabington.org/	April 28, 2024	No
Ambler	Trinity Church	https://trinityambler.nm-secure.com/	April 28, 2024	No
Andalusia	Redeemer	None	NA	No
Ardmore	St. Mary	https://www.stmarysardmore.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Ardmore	St. George	https://www.stgeorgeschurch.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Aston	Resurrection (Rockdale)	http://www.resurrectionrockdale.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Bala Cynwyd	St. Asaph	https://www.saintasaphs.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Bala Cynwyd	St. John	https://stjohnlm.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Blue Bell	St. Dunstan	http://stdunstans-bluebellpa.com/	April 30, 2024	No
Boothwyn	Trinity Church	https://www.trinityepiscopalboothwyn.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Bridgeport	Christ Church	None	NA	NA
Bristol	St. James the Greater	http://www.stjamesbristol.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Bryn Mawr	Redeemer	https://www.theredeemer.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Buckingham	Trinity Church	https://www.trinitybuckingham.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Chester	St. Mary	https://stmaryschester.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Chester	St. Paul	https://stpaulschesterpa.com/	April 29, 2024	No
Clifton Heights	St. Stephen	https://www.stsec.org/	April 29, 2024	No
Coatesville	The Trinity	https://www.trinitycoatesville.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Collegeville	St. James (Perkiomen)	https://www.stjames-episcopal.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Conshohocken	Calvary	None	NA	NA
Downingtown	St. James	https://sjecd.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Doylestown	St. Paul	https://www.stpaulsdoylestown.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Drexel Hill	Incarnation Holy Sacrament	https://www.ihschurch.com/	May 2, 2024	No
Drexel Hill	Holy Comforter	https://holycomforterdrexelhill.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Elkins Park	St. Paul	https://stpaulselkinspark.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Elverson	St. Mary at Calvary	https://saintmaryschapel.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Essington	St. John the Evangelist	https://www.stjohnsessington.com/	April 29, 2024	No
Exton	St. Paul	https://stpaulsextion.com/	April 29, 2024	No
Fallsington	All Saints	http://allsaintsfallsington.org	May 1, 2024	No

Fort Washington	St. Thomas (Whitemarsh)	https://www.stthomaswhitemarsh.org/	May 2, 2024	Yes ¹
Gap	St. John	https://saintjohnscompass.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Germantown	St. Luke	https://www.stlukesgermantown.com/	April 30, 2024	No
Gladwyne	St. Christopher	https://saintchristophers.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Glen Mills	St. John	https://saintjohnsconcord.com/	May 1, 2024	No
Glenmoore	St. Andrew	https://www.standrewschesco.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Glenside	St. Peter	https://www.stpetersglenside.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Harleysville	Holy Spirit	https://churchoftheholyspirit.us/	May 1, 2024	No
Hatboro	Advent	https://adventhatboro.org/	April 28, 2024	No
Hilltown	Good Shepherd	https://www.goodshepherdhilltown.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Honey Brook	St. Mark	https://stmarkshb.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Hulmeville	Grace Church	https://www.gracechurchhulmeville.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Huntington Valley	Our Saviour	https://churchofoursaviour.net/	April 30, 2024	No
Huntington Valley	St. John	https://www.stjohnschurchofoursaviour.org	April 30, 2024	No
Kennett Square	Advent	https://www.adventks.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Kensington	Free Church of St. John	https://www.freechurchstjohn.org/	April 29, 2024	No
King of Prussia	Trinity Church (Gulph Mills)	https://www.trinitygulphmills.org/	April 1, 2024	No
Lafayette Hill	St. Jude and the Nativity	None	NA	NA
Langhorne	St. James	https://www.stjameslanghorne.org/	April 28, 2024	No
Levittown	St. Paul	http://stpaulslevittown.org/	April 28, 2024	No
Lower Gwynedd	Messiah	https://www.messiahgwynedd.org/	April 28, 2024	No
Malvern	St. Francis in the Fields	https://stfrancisfields.com	May 2, 2024	No
Malvern	St. Peter (Great Valley)	https://www.stpetersgv.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Manayunk	St. David	https://stdavidsmanayunk.org	April 30, 2024	No
Maple Glen	St. Matthew	https://www.saintmattsec.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Media	Christ Church	https://www.christchurchmedia.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Morrisville	Incarnation	https://incarnationepiscopal.org/	May 2, 2024	No
New Hope	St. Philip	https://stphilipsnewhope.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Newtown	St. Luke	https://stlukesnewtownpa.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Newtown Square	St. Alban	https://www.stalbansnewtownsquare.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Norristown	All Saints	None	NA	NA

¹ “St Thomas’ offers age-appropriate Sunday School classes for our children. All classes meet from 11:15-12:15pm in the Parish House most Sundays and are taught by our trained, Safe Church-certified volunteer parishioners.” <https://www.stthomaswhitemarsh.org/children-and-family-ministries>

Norristown	St. Augustine of Hippo	None	NA	No
Norristown	St. John	https://www.stjohnsdiocesancenter.org/	April 2, 2024	No
Norwood	St. Stephen	http://sstephen.org/	April 2, 2024	No
Oaks	St. Paul	https://stpaulsoaks.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Oreland	St. Philip in the Fields	http://stphilipinthefields.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Oxford	St. Christopher	https://stchrisoxfordpa.wordpress.com/	May 2, 2024	No
Paoli	Good Samaritan	https://www.good-samaritan.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Parkesburg	Ascension	https://www.ascensionparkesburg.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. Clement	http://www.s-clements.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. Mark	https://www.saintmarksphiladelphia.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Philadelphia	Cathedral	https://www.philadelphiacathedral.org/	May 1, 2024	Yes ²
Philadelphia	Calvary-St. Augustine	https://www.calvarysaintaugustine.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Philadelphia	Christ and St. Michael	https://www.christchurchandstmichaels.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Philadelphia	Holy Trinity	https://htrit.org	April 30, 2024	No
Philadelphia	Christ Church	https://christchurchphila.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. James the Less	https://stjamesphila.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Philadelphia	House of Prayer	https://houseofprayerepiscopal.weebly.com/	April 29, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. Luke and the Epiphany	https://www.slatechurch.org/	April 29, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. Mark (Frankford)	https://www.stmarkschurchfrankford.com/	April 30, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. Martin in the Fields	https://www.stmartinec.org/	April 28, 2024	No
Philadelphia	Annunciation	None	NA	NA
Philadelphia	Crucifixion	None	NA	NA
Philadelphia	Emmanuel/Resurrection	https://rb.gy/lt8c5i	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	Gloria Dei	https://www.old-swedes.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	Grace and the Incarnation	http://graceincarnation.org/	May 1, 2024	Yes ³
Philadelphia	Grace Epiphany	https://www.graceepiphany.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	Holy Apostles and the Mediator	https://www.hamphilly.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	Holy Innocents/St. Paul	https://hispepiscopal.org/	May 1, 2024	Yes ⁴

² “We offer a safe and hygienic environment, with teachers trained in child abuse prevention.” <https://www.philadelphiacathedral.org/children>

³ <http://graceincarnation.org/safe-church/> exists, says “Under construction! May the peace of the Lord be with you!” Page has not changed since creation on March 31, 2023: <https://web.archive.org/web/20230331123225/http://graceincarnation.org/safe-church/>

⁴ <https://hispepiscopal.org/safe-church/> exists, says “Under construction! May the peace of the Lord be with you!” Page has not changed since creation on March 30, 2023: <https://web.archive.org/web/20230330210338/https://hispepiscopal.org/safe-church/>

Philadelphia	Cristo y San Ambrosio	None	NA	NA
Philadelphia	St. Luke (Bustleton)	http://www.memorialchurchofstlukes.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Philadelphia	Good Shepherd (East Falls)	https://goodshepherd-eastfalls.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. Andrew and St. Monica	https://ssandrewmonica.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. Andrew in the Field	None	NA	NA
Philadelphia	St. Dismas	None	NA	NA
Philadelphia	St. Gabriel	https://www.stgabrielepiscopalphila.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. George and St. Barnabas	https://sgsbchurch.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. James (Kingsessing)	https://stjameskingsessing.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. Mary (Cathedral Road)	http://stmaryscathedralroad.blogspot.com	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. Mary (Hamilton Village)	https://www.stmarysatpenn.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. Paul (Chestnut Hill)	https://stpaulschestnuthill.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. Peter	https://www.stpetersphila.org/	May 2, 2024	Yes ⁵
Philadelphia	St. Simon the Cyrenian	None	NA	No
Philadelphia	St. Stephen	https://www.ststephensphl.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	St. Thomas African	http://www.aecst.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	Advocate	None	NA	No
Philadelphia	Trinity Church (Oxford)	https://www.tcophilly.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Philadelphia	Trinity Memorial	https://trinityat22nd.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Phoenixville	St. Peter	https://saintpeterschurch.net/	May 2, 2024	No
Pottstown	Christ Church	https://www.christpottstown.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Prospect Park	St. James	https://stjamesprospectpark.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Quakertown	Emmanuel	https://emmanuelquakertown.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Radnor	St. Martin	https://stmartinsradnor.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Rhawnhurst	All Saints	http://allsaintsrhawnhurst.weebly.com	May 1, 2024	No
Ridley Park	Christ Church	https://www.christchurchridleypark.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Rockledge	Holy Nativity	https://www.holynativityrockledge.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Rosemont	Good Shepherd	https://www.goodshepherdrosemont.com/	May 1, 2024	No
Roxborough	St. Alban	http://www.churchofstalban.com/	April 30, 2024	No
Roxborough	St. Timothy	https://www.sttimsrox.com/	April 30, 2024	No
Royersford	Epiphany	https://www.redemptionepiscopalchurch.org/	May 2, 2024	No
Solebury	Trinity Church	https://www.trinitysolebury.org/	April 30, 2024	No

⁵ “There will always be one teacher and at least one additional adult volunteer, and all Sunday School leaders have completed background checks and training in how to keep children safe.” <https://www.stpetersphila.org/worship/family-worship/>

Southampton	Redemption	https://www.redemptionepiscopalchurch.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Springfield	Redeemer	https://www.redeemerspringfield.net/	May 1, 2024	No
Swarthmore	Trinity Church	https://www.trinity-swarthmore.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Torresdale	All Saints	https://allsaintstorresdale.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Valley Forge	Washington Memorial	https://www.wmchapel.org/	April 29, 2024	No
Villanova	Christ Church Ithan	https://www.christchurchithan.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Wayne	St. Mary	https://www.stmaryswaynepa.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Wayne	St. David	https://stdavidschurch.org/	May 2, 2024	No
West Chester	Holy Trinity	https://www.holytrinitywc.com/	May 2, 2024	No
Wrightstown	Holy Nativity	http://www.holynativitychurch.org	May 2, 2024	No
Wyncote	All Hallows	https://www.allhallowswyncote.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Wynnewood	All Saints	http://www.allsaintswynnewood.org/	May 1, 2024	No
Wynnewood	Holy Apostles	https://www.holyapostlespa.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Yardley	St. Andrew	https://www.standrews-yardley.org/	April 30, 2024	No
Yeadon	St. Michael	None	NA	NA